

sea turtle, hawksbill sea turtle, and Kemp's ridley sea turtle. One marine turtle is listed for Craven County: leatherback sea turtle. All five species have similar habitat requirements and are treated together.

The loggerhead sea turtle is the most common sea turtle on the coast of the North Carolina and is most numerous from late April to October. This species averages 31 to 47 inches in length and weighs from 170 to 500 pounds (lbs) (Martof *et al.* 1980³⁵). The loggerhead sea turtle is temperate or subtropical in nature, and is primarily oceanic, but it may also stray into freshwater bays, sounds, and large rivers. Nesting habitat for loggerhead sea turtles consists of ocean beaches.

The green sea turtle is most commonly found in the Caribbean where it breeds on sandy beaches, although individuals, usually immatures, are occasionally found along the North Carolina coast and the species has been documented as rarely nesting in North Carolina. The green sea turtle reaches lengths of 30 to 60 inches and weights of 220 to 650 lbs, and has a smooth, heart-shaped shell (Martof *et al.* 1980³⁵). Green sea turtles are omnivorous, primarily eating jellyfish and seaweeds (NMFS 1998b⁵³).

Although primarily tropical in nature, the range of the leatherback sea turtle may extend to Nova Scotia and Newfoundland (Martof *et al.* 1980³⁵). The leatherback sea turtle sometimes moves into shallow bays, estuaries, and even river mouths. The leatherback sea turtle is distinguishable by its larger size [46 to 70-inch carapace, 650 to 1,500 lbs] and a ridged shell of soft, leathery skin. The leatherback sea turtle feeds extensively on jellyfish, although its diet often includes other sea animals and seaweed. The leatherback sea turtle typically nests on sandy beaches in tropical areas.

The hawksbill turtle is a small to medium-sized sea turtle that is distinguished from other sea turtles by a beak-like mouth, two claws on each flipper, and, when on land, an alternating gait, unlike the leatherback and green sea turtles. Hawksbill turtles are found in tropical ocean habitats and only rarely wander to the shores of North Carolina (Martof *et al.* 1980³⁵). Nesting typically occurs on beaches in tropical oceans, typically underneath vegetation (NMFS 1993⁵⁴).